



Counting Coup: A True Story of Basketball and Honor on the Little Big Horn

Larry Colton

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In Native American tradition, a warrior gained honor and glory by "counting coup" -- touching his enemy in battle and living to tell the tale. This is a modern story of...

COUNTING COUP

In this extraordinary work of journalism, Larry Colton journeys into the world of Montana's Crow Indians and follows the struggles of a talented, moody, charismatic young woman named Sharon LaForge, a gifted basketball player and a descendant of one of George Armstrong Custer's Indian scouts. But "Counting Coup" is far more than just a sports story or a portrait of youth. It is a sobering exposé of a part of our society long since cut out of the American dream.

Along the banks of the Little Big Horn, Indians and whites live in age-old conflict and young Indians grow up without role models or dreams. Here Sharon carries the hopes and frustrations of her people on her shoulders as she battles her opponents on and off the court. Colton delves into Sharon's life and shows us the realities of the reservation, the shattered families, the bitter tribal politics, and a people's struggle against a belief that all their children -- even the most intelligent and talented -- are destined for heartbreak. Against this backdrop stands Sharon, a fiery, undaunted competitor with the skill to dominate a high school game and earn a college scholarship. Yet getting to college seems beyond Sharon's vision, obscured by the daily challenge of getting through the season -- physically and ps

Counting Coup: A True Story of Basketball and Honor on the Little Big Horn Details

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From Reader Review Counting Coup: A True Story of Basketball and Honor on the Little Big Horn for online ebook

Charlie Webster says

I loved this book. Picture Friday Night Lights with a few substitutions: Montana, basketball, and indigenous Americans (instead of Texas, football, Southerners). In fact, in the Q&A at the end of the book Colton says he was influenced by FNLs (the book) style. Even beyond that Larry Colton writes a compelling story from the first person that instantly draws you in. You can't help but feel for these kids who are dealing with broken homes, drugs, abuse, illness and yet are leading on the basketball court. Most of all, you'll find yourself rooting for Sharon the protagonist of this book. I can't recommend this book enough. It's full of heartbreak, drama, basketball, and hope! Read it!

Sheri S. says

I was surprised by how much I enjoyed this book. It was entertaining, informative and sometimes suspenseful. The book describes one man's experience living on the Little Big Horn as he gets to know the people of Crow Agency, Montana. He develops relationships with Indians and Whites alike and immerses himself in the culture of the town and the reservation (i.e. going to sweats, powwows, tribal meetings). In particular, he follows the Hardin High girls basketball team as they seek to win a championship title. The star player, Sharon LaForge, is an Indian who shows great promise on the court but faces many of the challenges which have historically been obstacles to individuals living on the reservation. Among these challenges are domestic violence, drug and alcohol use and lack of education goals.

I gained a greater understanding of life on the reservation and the challenges faced by Indians through the reading of this book. The author does a good job describing his own feelings as he watches the girls on the basketball team make, what he believes to be, poor choices. He also points out that white man's definition of success is different from what may be termed success according to those who live on the reservation.

Sheila says

This was a very revealing story about basketball on the Crow Indian Reservation. When I was young I lived on a cattle ranch on the Crow Reservation so this book was especially meaningful to me. When my parent divorced I moved off the ranch and to a small town outside of Billings, MT. Basketball was my sport in high school and I played against Hardin, the Lodge Grass Indians, Shepard (with the cattle feed lot right outside the gymnasium doors), Roundup, etc. So this book brought back many memories for me and really hit home. This book is a very revealing account of many Indian women on the reservation. The author is also a resident of Portland, and I have had the privilege of hearing him speak about the time he spent writing the book and his time on the reservation. Anyone interested in Montana would enjoy this book and I would highly recommend it!

Reff Girl says

could not put this down. Larry Colton documents a season of the Lady Bulldogs of Hardin High School on the Crow Reservation. Colton tries to remain neutral in the story, but his sympathy for his subjects do come through, exposing the strengths and weakness of the citizens of Hardin.

Lori J Vencill says

Well done!

I liked the story line and the first person perspective being from outside the tribe. I was happy for the success of the girls after the story ended.

Chrisl says

Counting Coup tells about life on the Crow Reservation in Montana. It is a tale of alcohol, sports and tragedy, and it is emotionally linked in my mind to seeing an Eastern Oregon college basketball player die during a game I watching from the front row in January 1968.

He was leading a fast break, pursued by a defender and inadvertently tripped. He slid head first into the steel plate that connected the floor to the wall. The sound, the spasm. Steel wall base!

He had been a high school basketball star. He had a wife and child.

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The borrowed KIRKUS REVIEW

"The social dilemmas faced by present-day Native Americans are revealed in this journalistic look at a high school girls' basketball team in Crow, Montana.

In a previous book, *Goat Brothers* (1993), Colton examined the lives of fraternity brothers from the 1960s to the 1990s. Here, he spends a season living and observing the Hardin High School girls' basketball team, a team comprised of white girls and Crow Indians. Although Colton manages to give a face to the different players, he is particularly fascinated by 17-year-old Sharon Laforge, an extremely talented American Indian who hopes to earn a college basketball scholarship, but whose future is threatened by several factors, including an absentee father, an alcoholic mother, a possessive and abusive boyfriend, an undisciplined lifestyle, and pressure from peers and community. The racial oppression that Native Americans still face, especially in small rural towns, is another factor. Hardin's population of 2,990 is 49 percent Crow Indian, and mistrust and misunderstanding exists between cultures: the Crows see the whites as having inherited privilege, and the working-class whites see the Crows as having access to government funds, services, and scholarships that they themselves cannot get. In addition, the emerging status of women, especially star athletes such as Sharon, threatens the downtrodden and jealous Crow men who traditionally are used to being in charge. "Counting coup," an Indian battle term that referred to warriors gaining honor, respect, and dignity, is now also a Hardin High School basketball term that refers to dominating one's opponent. In this *Hoop Dreams for American Indians*, Colton shows how a handful of girls try to count coup against opponents who appear on more than just the basketball court.

Colton's account of the environment he witnesses, while not particularly enlightening, does provide good dramatic background for his story of the team's attempt to make, and win, the state championship."

Herman says

One of my 5 star book I loved this book it's a wonderful story in fact it's been a number of years I think I'll read it again just to remind myself why I loved it so much.

Janae Johnson says

I grew up 20 miles away from the Apache reservation but it may as well have been on a different continent. I didn't know anything about them--other then the fact that they were phenomenal at basketball and that the reservation was seen by Anglos as "sketchy". This book broke my heart and made me want to go back in time and befriend those classmates of mine from the reservation. This book shed light on the true struggles these people face by following the story of one girl in particular. It's a must read to better understand our Native American neighbors.

Brenna says

This "author" is sexualizing these young girls. Wtf? Who gave this book any medal?

Brenda says

A basketball story, also a small town story, a "life on the Rez" story. This book gives insight into the difficulties that Native peoples face, complete with the poverty, alcoholism, abuse, family dysfunction. But also the dignity and maturity that one young woman gains.

Spacek Kim says

This book was recommended to me by Dr. Jerry Krause, Basketball Coach, who I worked for back in college at Eastern Washington University. Since moving to work at Inchelium, we met several times to discuss life and basketball. He mentioned this book as he was intrigued by the lack of Native American athletes moving into college athletics after successful high school careers. The story of Sharon LaForge reminded me of a student at Inchelium High School. There were a lot of similarities and your heart goes out to these students. As a school superintendent in a school district with predominately Native American students, it makes me want to work in a way that creates hope for these students after high school. These students really are the 'silent' minority.

Kelly says

3.5 stars

Warren says

The book is well written. It tells a story all too frequently observed in this area of the country. The story, even though written in the early 1990s, hasn't changed much from that time and prior. The item I liked most about the story is Mr. Colton while rooting for Sharon and her teammates writes about what he sees and experiences versus trying to justify or preach about the circumstances. A recent follow-up to this story in the regional newspaper takes a look at the main character 25 years later. Not much has changed. I recommend this book.

My'Kuyah Anteros says

Terrific story of the author's year on the Crow Reservation in Montana following the high school girls' basketball team

Andrea says

Counting Coup might not have ever appeared on my "to read" list, described on its cover as, "A true story of basketball and honour on the Little Big Horn," primarily because I have little knowledge of either competitive basketball or life on an Indian Reservation, but appear it did, and upon reading I am left feeling grateful that this story was written and that it found its way into my hands and my heart.

It was Colton's ability to spin a yarn that drew me into the book and kept me there. His willingness to write the often less than perfect truths about himself gained my trust as a reader, so that the story he paints of Indian culture, and North American society and more importantly the perfectly rendered portrait of teenage girls whose paths can fork towards either success or failure--is not only believable but make Counting Coup a story bigger than basketball or reservations. An underdog myself, I'm left weighing what really defines success or failure.

The central character in Counting Coup, Sharon LaForge, is a fragile heroine, one I could not help but root for and admire, despite her willingness to self sabotage. Hers is a plight anyone born into a broken home, or relegated to the dregs will identify with. Her story is about the audacity to dream, and to claim our own worthiness when even our genetic makeup tells us to take the low road, to settle for less than who we could become.

Of all the adjectives I could use to describe Counting Coup, I was most surprised by the humour in the story and the tension that had me burning through the pages. I had to know how the Hardin Lady Bulldog's season ended, and the final score of each game, despite having never attended a basketball game, surely a testimony to the competence of the author. I will recommend this book to anyone.

